

FCC Consumer Advisory

Modem Redialing

Consumers have informed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) that they have been billed for international calls that occurred as a result of using local (domestic) Internet service providers to access Web sites. The FCC is monitoring the situation. There are some precautions you can take to minimize your chances of becoming a victim.

Here's How It Works

Some Web sites encourage computer users to download software in order to view certain material. Unknown to that user, the downloaded software disconnects his or her computer's modem and then reconnects it using an international long distance number. Also, some Web sites' pop-up advertisements may install spyware-type programs that initiate the same action on a computer modem, even if the user does not click to accept an offer. The result: the modem may actually be placing a call to places as far away as Chad, Madagascar or other countries, and the computer user may be billed for an international call.

IMPORTANT: Don't download programs from the Internet without reading the disclosures. Some Web sites may be advertised as "free and uncensored" or may allow information to be downloaded. However, a pop-up window with a disclaimer should appear. The disclaimer usually reveals information on possible charges or the rerouting of the Web site. It may say, "you will be disconnected from your local Internet access number and reconnected to an international location" (which may be Chad, Madagascar, Vanuatu or some other country). It is important that consumers read the disclaimer to learn what charges will be assessed before they click the box. If they still choose to download, consumers should be prepared to receive a phone bill with high international toll charges. There may also be charges from a non-telecommunications company that provides a billing service to the Web site in question.

To minimize the risk of this happening: 1) Individuals should ask their local phone company for an INTERNATIONAL BLOCK on their computer line. 2) Individuals who acquire broadband Internet access should consider disabling their modems. 3) Individuals should take advantage of firewalls, virus protection and anti-spyware programs, and ensure that they have downloaded the latest updates of their operating systems and internet applications.

(More)
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Federal Communications Commission • Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau • 445 12th St., SW • Washington, DC 20554
1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) • TTY: 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322) • Fax: 1-866-418-0232 • www.fcc.gov/cgb

Filing a Complaint with the FCC

There is no charge to file an informal complaint with the FCC. Your complaint letter should include your name, address, telephone number or numbers involved with your complaint, a telephone number where you can be reached during the business day, and the name of your long distance carrier. Your letter should also provide as much specific information about your complaint as possible, such as an explanation of the circumstances that led to your complaint, the names of all telephone or other companies involved with your complaint, the names and telephone numbers of the telephone company employees that you talked with in an effort to resolve your complaint, the dates that you talked with these employees, and any other information (such as any suspicious activities involving computer use) that would help the FCC to process your complaint. Your local telephone company also often has records that are essential to processing your complaint. You should then mail your complaint to:

Federal Communications Commission
Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

To file your complaint electronically, go to: www.fcc.gov/cgb/complaints.html. You can also file by e-mail at: fccinfo@fcc.gov.

Filing a Complaint with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC)

You can also submit your complaint, in writing, to the FTC. Your FTC complaint should be mailed to:

Consumer Response Center
Federal Trade Commission
600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20580

FTC toll-free number: 1-877-382-4357; TTY: 1-866-653-4261

FTC Web address: www.ftc.gov

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For this or any other consumer publication in an accessible format (electronic ASCII text, Braille, large print, or audio) please write or call us at the address or phone number below, or send an e-mail to FCC504@fcc.gov.

To receive information on this and other FCC consumer topics through the Commission's electronic subscriber service, click on <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/contacts/>.

This document is for consumer education purposes only and is not intended to affect any proceeding or cases involving this subject matter or related issues.

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